

## Free Lunch

By Samuel Scoville, Jr.



THE Out-of-Doors Club, known as the Band for short, was a secret organization which specialized in desperate out-of-door adventures. It was led by the Captain, who in private life was known as Fathy.

The other officers were the Third, Trottie, Honey, Henny-Penny, and Alice-Palace. There were no privates. Then there was Mother, the Quartermaster-General, Minnie and Annie in charge of the Commissary, and old John the gardener, the head of the Engineer Corps.

Today when the Band had met for its weekly walk the lunch had been entrusted to Honey. There was a long, dry, spicy saveloy sausage wrapped in tissue-paper, a cluster of raisins, three thick scones apiece, and a little package of cocoa, which could be brewed in the tin cup which the Captain carried in a pocket of his khaki shooting-jacket. All of these necessary and appetizing articles had been wrapped in a tight little bundle and left on the hall-table by long-suffering Minnie, the cook, the night before.

There had been an early breakfast and a five-mile tramp to the frozen depths of Blacksnake Swamp. This great marsh, which was so treacherous and impassable in summer, was today frozen hard and safe, and bottomless Mirror Pool looked like black glass. They explored all secret places. Just as they suspected, the Band found that the long-billed marsh-wren nested among the cattails which grew in the very heart of the swamp, guarded in summer by a stretch of quivering, impassable mud. There were the nests, made of the stalks of cattails bent down and thatched on the outside with grass, like big brown balls. Inside, they were lined with soft, velvety down from the heads of the cattails.

There were five nests, but the Captain said that probably they were all the work of one pair of birds. After the nest is built the father marsh-wren has a funny habit of building a lot of other nests while the mother-wren is sitting. Perhaps he does this to keep himself in prac-

tice for another year, or perhaps he thinks that he can fool any one coming to rob the nest by having a lot of false nests around the real one. At any rate, there are usually four or five nests to each marsh-wren family.



THE NEST OF THE LONG BILLED MARSH-WREN

Over beyond the cattails was a wide grassy stretch, covered smooth with white snow. There the Band did some trailing and tracking.

They found innumerable rabbit-tracks, two holes wide apart and two holes close together; and the Captain said the rabbit was going in the direction of the wide-apart marks. He explained that every time Bunny jumped, his long legs came out in front and made the far-apart marks, while the two little fore legs made the other marks which were close together.

Everywhere, too, there was a tracery of fine, delicate little paw-prints with the marks of long tails. These were made by the meadow-mice, which tunnel under the snow, and are just as active in winter as in summer,

Among them was a strange track, almost like the trail of a snake; only, of course, all the snakes were fast asleep far underground. It was wide through, with little, close-set, zigzag paw-marks all through it. The Captain told the Band that this was the trail of the fierce blarina shrew, one of the greatest killers known.

"If the blarina were as large as a dog," said the Captain, "we should not be safe anywhere, for every one of them eats twice its own weight in flesh every twenty-four hours. Under ground, above ground, or under the water it kills and kills and kills. It has to," went on the Captain, "for it starves to death in six hours if it can't get flesh."

The Band regarded the strange tracks with enormous interest.

"How big do they grow?" anxiously inquired Henny-Penny, the littlest but one of the Band.

"Just about as long as my middle finger," the Captain reassured him.

Suddenly in the midst of all these snow-stories the Band began to get hungry.

"Lunchtime!" they all shouted together.

Then it was that the guilty Honey remembered for the first time that the lunch was lying on the hall-table instead of bulging out of his pocket. There was great wrath among the other members of the Band when he faltered out the sad truth.

"Five miles from home, and our whole day spoiled," wailed Trottie, always the hungriest of them all. Even Henny-Penny, usually Honey's firmest ally, re-



THE TRAIL OF THE MEADOW-MOUSE



garded him reproachfully, while Alice-Palace, the littlest of the Band, lifted up her voice several feet in an exhibition of grief that bade fair to scare away even the bloodthirsty blarinas for miles around. Only quick action on the part of the Captain saved the day.

"Comrades," said he, placing one hand over Alice-Palace's widely opened mouth, "all is not lost. Woodsmen like ourselves can find food anywhere. Follow me. Hist!"

Like Hawk-Eye and Chingachguch and other well-known scouts, the Captain always employed that mysterious word when beginning a desperate adventure. The Band followed him to the other side of the great swamp. They crossed a brook, and found themselves in a little grove of swamp-maples which had grown around the fallen trunk of the parent tree. The Captain scanned the snow carefully. Everywhere were trails which, like rabbit-tracks, by their position showed that they had been made by some animal which hopped. Instead of the holes made by the rabbits there were little paw-marks, and the Captain told the Band that these were the tracks of gray squirrels, which had come down through the woods into the marsh.

"Cheer up, comrades," he said, looking carefully among the trees; "I see something."

Even as he spoke, he reached up; and there, wedged in between a little twig and the smooth trunk of a swamp-maple sapling, was a big, dry, seasoned black walnut. Then the Band began to look, and they found the leafless trees filled with walnuts, each one wedged so that it would not blow down.

Up and about the low trees climbed and scrambled the Band. It was great fun. Sometimes the nuts were hidden and sometimes in plain sight, but all together there were nearly half a peck of them, seasoned until the rich gold kernel was dry and crisp. They had come upon the winter storehouse of a gray-squirrel family. The red squirrel, as the Captain explained to them, hides his nuts in heaps in hollow trees or under rocks, but the gray squirrel tucks his away separately one by one. When at last the nuts had been collected, they were all piled together in the lee of a big black oak-tree where the camp-fire was to be made. When this was done, the Band were anxious to qualify as expert nut-crackers, but the Captain would not let them begin.

"We've got to get our dessert before we start lunch," he said, leading them back into the swamp.

Beside a broken-down rail fence he stopped, before a thicket of tiny trees with smooth trunks, whose gray twigs were loaded down with bunches of what looked like little purple plums. Each one had a layer of dried blue sweet pulp over a flat stone; and the pulp, what

there was of it, was as sweet as sugar, with a curious spicy taste. The Captain told them that these were nanny-plums, belonging to the viburnum family.

Farther on they found clusters of little purple fox-grapes, fiercely sour in the fall, but under the bite of the frost they had sweetened enough to be swallowed.

Still the Captain was not ready to sit down. Up the hillside he led them, by a winding path through tangled thickets, until in a level place beside a little brook he brought them to a group of curious trees. The bark of these was deeply grooved and in places nearly three inches thick. The stiff branches were covered with scores of golden-red globes. Some were wrinkled and frost-bitten until they had turned brown, but others still hung plump and bright in the winter air. It was a persimmon grove which the Captain had discovered.

Before he could be stopped Henny-Penny had picked one of the best-looking of the lot, and took a deep bite of the soft, luscious fruit. Immediately thereafter he spat out his first taste of persimmon with great emphasis, his mouth so puckered that it was with difficulty that he could express his entirely unfavorable opinion of the new fruit.

"Handsome is as handsome does," warned the Captain. "Try some of the frost-bitten ones."

Accordingly the Band selected the worst-looking specimens they could find on the trees, and found that the more wrinkled the persimmon, the sweeter the taste and the less the pucker.

On the way back the Captain suddenly stopped. In front of him grew several small trees whose branches were all matted together here and there in tangled bunches which looked like birds' nests. At the end of the twigs grew single round purple berries about the size of a wild cherry. Alice-Palace said this must be the bird's-nest tree, but the Captain told them that these were young hackberry-trees. They picked handfuls of these berries, which had a sweet, spicy pulp over a fragile stone that could be crushed like the seeds of a raisin. In fact, the berry very much resembled the raisin in taste.

The camp once reached, there followed a feast which the Band never forgot. Around a roaring fire of dry hickory and sassafras branches they sat with their back against the great oaktree, and cracked and cracked nuts, which tasted far better than any tame ones which could be bought at grocery-stores. Along with the nuts they crunched sugar-berries, and nibbled nanny-plums, and tasted frost-grapes, while for dessert each one had a handful of the honey-sweet wrinkled persimmons. "It was lucky, though," said Trottie, "that the Captain was along. If we hadn't found this lunch, we'd have left him tied to a tree for the blarinas to eat up."

## Nicholas Campana—American Citizen

BY MARGUERITE GEIBEL

NICHOLAS hated school. Not because he minded the lessons, but oh, how he hated to be called names—as if it were a disgrace to be an Italian!

It was noon, and the last bell was ringing. Nick ran in, glad to escape the calls of "Dago, Dago" which he was sure to hear three times a day. Someone always started it.

Nick sighed as he sank into his seat. At least they couldn't call him names while he was there. He looked about at the unfriendly faces—some of them grinned, but nobody smiled. And like all Italians, Nick wanted friends. He turned his head to where his cousin Joseph sat. Joe smiled, of course—even after the most bitter of fights, he and Joe were the best friends in the world.

Nick turned around quickly, as the teacher touched the little bell on her desk. Miss Wayne was popular. She had a nice way of asking things, that made people want to do them. But who was the strange man? A visitor, who would probably talk to them.

"I have a surprise for someone in this room." It was the teacher speaking. "I know no one would ever guess what it is or whom it concerns, so I'll hint about it, to help you."

There was a little scuffle all over the room. Everyone sat up straight—all ears and eyes. Surprises didn't come every day, in fifth grade.

"Now," Miss Wayne suggested, "watch for hints that will tell whose surprise it is."

"We're supposed to be studying Alaska today, but I've switched over to—somewhere else, a nice warm country where the happiest people in the world live, and where so many artists come from—the great Michael Angelo, who was a painter and sculptor and architect and poet. Many people say no greater sculptor ever lived. And Michael was an Italian."

Nick began to wonder if Miss Wayne had forgotten the surprise. But for that matter, every scholar in the room was wondering the same thing. Of course Nick wanted to hear about the country his father and mother talked about, but what had Italy to do with the surprise?

"Joseph, you ought to know who the great Italian poet was—one of the greatest of all poets of all time."

Joseph's answer was prompt, "Dante."

Nick's heart warmed, as Miss Wayne told of the glory of Italy—its warm beautiful skies—its friendly happy people, and the beautiful paintings and buildings there, because Italians loved art.

Miss Wayne spoke too, of their success as farmers, for the Italians seem to have a way of making things grow.

"Did any of you ever notice that very, very few Italians are ever arrested for stealing? If all races were as honest we would have little use for locks on our doors. A prominent man said recently,



that the Italians would be our very best citizen, if ——"

Miss Wayne paused, and her eyes twinkled. "Does anyone know why they are not the best?"

No one seemed to know—not even Nick or Joseph.

"I'll have to tell you. It's because they love their own sunny country so well, that they go back to it. That's a pretty good sort of visitor, isn't it—the kind you never want to see leaving?"

"Now for the surprise. Someone in our room has shown talent as an artist—and when I showed his work to Mr. Chandler," Miss Wayne turned to the visitor, who was enjoying himself immensely, "he was much interested."

All eyes turned to Nick. It was Nick whose paintings were often better than the drawing teacher's; Nick who drew the pictures on the board on Thanksgiving and Christmas and all the other holidays.

Nick dropped his curly brown head. Everyone was staring first at the artist and then at Nick.

"Yes," Miss Wayne said, "you've guessed it. It is Nick. And Mr. Chandler, who, you all know, is an artist, is going to give him lessons free—as long as he wants them."

Nick's head came up with a jerk. His brown eyes grew big, and bigger. Lessons! He, Nicholas Campana, would go to the big house of the artist, and learn all that could be taught, of the work he loved. Had not their drawing teacher told all about Mr. Chandler—how he had been a poor boy and because of his talent had become rich? And now Nick was perhaps going to be just as great. Mr. Chandler had said so.

Joe, across the room, was grinning from ear to ear, quite as happy as if the good fortune had been his own, instead of his cousin's.

"Some day," the teacher was saying, "we shall probably boast about having known Nicholas Campana well."

Nick felt sure he could never be any happier. Why he loved school! If he hadn't been going to school, this never could have happened.

And, somehow, the boys never called "Dago" any more. It would seem odd to call "Dago" at the boy who, their own great artist had decided, would be famous in a few years. Besides, was not Nick an American citizen, like the rest of them?

### The Tongue Followed the Hand

THE children of the second grade were busily employed on the writing lesson when Susie raised her hand. "Please, Miss Wright, Johnny Phipps isn't doing the lesson right."

"What do you mean, Susie?" asked the teacher.

"Why, the lesson is capital S's, and he's making L's."

"How do you know, Susie? You can't see his copy book."

"No'm, but I can see his tongue."

### When Grandpa Was a Lad

BY MARGUERITE NORRIS DAVIS

WHEN Grandpa was a lad like me,  
He often tells me how  
He helped his father sow the seed,  
And walked behind the plow.

In spring he tapped the maple tree,  
And caught the syrup sweet;  
Then boiled it down to sugar cakes,  
To store for winter treat.

On summer days he stole away  
Out to the Swimmin' Hole,  
Where boys could swim until they tired—  
Then on the grass they'd roll.

In Grandpa's day he rode bareback  
A horse called Dolly Gray.  
She was his very own, he says;  
He loves her to this day.

My Grandpa says his mother made  
Most luscious cakes and pies,  
And jam and "jell" and mincemeat, too.  
(Mine cannot, though she tries!)

It must have been a lot of fun  
To ride and swim and plow,  
And yet, I think, it's wonderful  
To be a boy just now.

I've helped Dad fix a radio.  
(He says I did it right.)  
The boys and girls come to our house,  
To "listen in" each night.

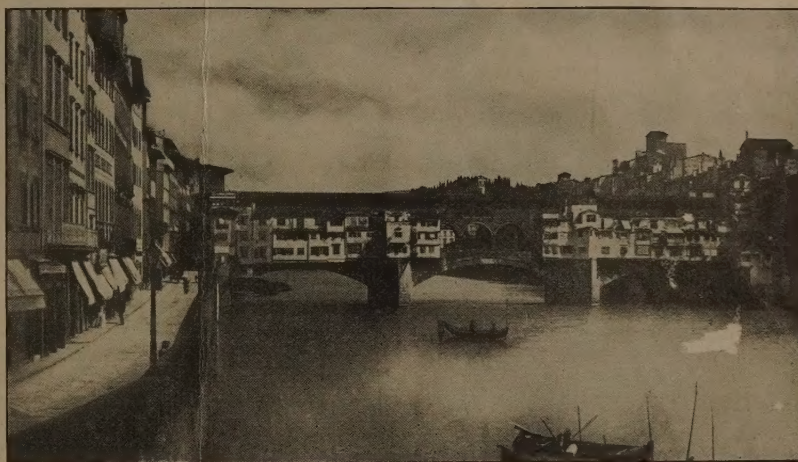
I have a bicycle I call  
My good and trusty steed.  
It needs no water nor no food,  
And I control its speed.

My "scooter" made from roller skates,  
Can go just like the wind—  
I have to manage it just right,  
Or get my knees all skinned!

Tho' Mother can't make flakey crust,  
And buys her mincemeat canned,  
She makes *pals* of my Dad and me.  
She's ever in demand.

The auto, 'phone, electric lights,  
The aeroplane and more,  
Replace for boys of modern times  
The fun of days of yore.

I'm sure that Grandpa's youthful days  
Were full of lots of joy,  
But I believe I'd rather be  
A Twentieth Century boy!



### A Bridge of Silversmiths

BY OSCAR LEWIS

One of the oldest and certainly one of the most picturesque bridges in existence is that shown in the accompanying photograph. Spanning the river Arno where that most beautiful of Italian rivers flows through Florence, the Ponte Vecchio (or Old Bridge), though built in its present form in the fourteenth century, rests upon the remains of a Roman bridge which dates from many hundred years earlier. The charming and picturesque feature of this ancient bridge consists in the double line of old houses which cling to its sides. These buildings, projecting out over the edge of the bridge on both sides and hanging perilously above the water, for centuries have been occupied by the

shops of goldsmiths and silversmiths. The windows of the tiny shops face inward toward the center of the bridge so that a person crossing the river here finds himself passing between a double row of tiny shops, their windows glistening with the delicate and beautiful jewelry which is made in other small rooms hanging over the water in the rear.

It is only when the passerby catches a glimpse of the surface of the Arno through one of these windows, or reaches the small open space in the center, that he realizes that he has been walking, not on the solid pavement of the street, but upon the arches of this ancient and historic bridge.





## THE BEACON CLUB

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.



Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of The Beacon Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

1003 MARTIN ST., EAST END,  
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

Dear Miss Buck:—I am a member of the Beacon Club but in this letter I want to tell everyone how thankful I am to the Club for getting so many correspondents. If there is anything I can do for anyone in the Club I would be very glad to do it. If anyone would like to write to me I would be more than glad to write to them. Our class consists of Elsie Ginter, Margaret Kurz, Ida MacEvers, Katherine Hawk, Ida Shere. We have a Club called The Bluebird Club; it meets the first Sunday of every month.

I like the Sunday school I go to very much. We are now having a membership contest. Our class is divided into two parts, three Reds and three Blues.

I hope some more girls from different cities will write to me, especially from the south and west, but if girls from the north and east write to me I will gladly write to them. I am fourteen years old. I certainly enjoy writing to Jessie Owens, Jeanette Beecher, Louise Gosner, Ruth Martin, Jennie Kribsstock, Margaret Morrison, Natalie Blake, Tellervo Lappala, Emily Stewart, Marion E. Star, and lots of others.

Affectionately your friend,  
HELEN SCHOEN.

### Church School News

THE annual report from the First Congregational (Unitarian) Church School of Providence, R. I., shows a list of four officers, fourteen teachers, fourteen substitute teachers, and a membership of 153 pupils. Mrs. Ryder Holmes Gay is the Director of Religious Education and there is also this year an assistant director, Miss Astrid H. Carlborg. The report states that the merit system is in use again this year as last and is a great success. The school employs a Director of Music, Miss Annette Ham. She will organize and train a Senior and Junior chorus and will train the school as a whole for special services. There is also a fine school orchestra. New services of worship have been compiled for the use of the school and inserted in the hymnbook. A parent-teacher organization has been established. Teachers' meetings are held once a month at which a supper is served by four of the members and there is in attendance, beside the teachers, the Pastoral Committee and the Church School Committee of the Alliance and the Laymen's League. The two teams in the school contest this year are named the "Stars" and the "Beacons." The names of members of each of these groups, (thirty in each group having perfect attendance for the month of October) are printed in the calendar for November 4th.

At the Church of the Unity, St. Louis, Mo., Dr. George R. Dodson, minister, there is a Sunday morning class for young people which is led by the minister and is largely attended. An adult

1946 ELEVENTH AVE., W.,  
VANCOUVER, B. C.

Dear Miss Buck:—I attend the First Unitarian Church here. My father conducts both the services and the Young People's Class. There are six girls and three boys, counting myself. I bring *The Beacon* home every Sunday and enjoy reading the stories and working the puzzles. I would like to become a member of the Club and wear a button. I am eleven years old and would like to correspond with any other member of my own age.

Yours very truly,  
STUART THOMSON.

70 DEAN STREET,  
BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck:—I go to the Unitarian Church of Bridgewater, Mass. I read *The Beacon* and enjoy it. I would like very much to become a member of the Beacon Club.

Mrs. Smith, of Charleston, S. C., is now with us. There are five girls in my class. Mrs. Smith is my teacher until we find another.

Your friend,  
BARBARA SHOCKLEY.

Here is a chance to let our light shine by helping to brighten the home-light in a really, truly lighthouse home. Send Christmas cards to Miss Alice L. Conary, Deer Island Thoroughfare Light Station, Stonington, Me.

class meets at the same time in the Alliance room and this year will study some of the great personalities of history. The church school, of which Mrs. F. A. Croft is Superintendent, is growing in interest and numbers. The attendance on the last Sunday in October at the church school was 137. A church-time kindergarten is conducted every Sunday in order to enable parents of young children to attend the services.

The First Unitarian Society in Newton, Mass., has a church-school choir which meets for practise on Wednesday afternoons in the parish house. The first of the church-school suppers for the year was held on October 19th. There are children's classes in music education meeting on Mondays at 4 o'clock for younger children and at 4.45 for older. Both classes assemble at the time the older pupils arrive for twenty minutes of "music appreciation."

The church school of the Second Church in Boston, Mass., has this year as Superintendent Mr. Waitstill H. Sharp. The school meets at 9.45 on Sunday morning. A Bible class for adults under the leadership of Prof. Sleeper meets in the church gallery during the school session. There is also a college discussion class at the same hour which is a pronounced success in attendance and interest. Children are cared for during the church hour so that their parents may attend church.

Report comes to us that the school at Plainfield, New Jersey, has opened vigorously this year with an attendance of sixty and is steadily growing.

## RECREATION CORNER.

### ENIGMA XIX

I am composed of 14 letters.  
My 8, 4, 6, 10, 7, is an important organ of the body.  
My 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 7, is filled with trees.  
My 5, 3, 13, 14, is a small battle.  
My 12, 6, 7, 4, is a fruit.  
My whole is a day to be remembered by all Americans.

J. W.

### ENIGMA XX

I am composed of 24 letters.  
My 4, 23, 6, 21, is not all.  
My 22, 9, 11, 8, is where money is coined.  
My 1, 18, 19, 3, 24, 8, is a churchman.  
My 13, 15, 14, 12, 21, is often seen in winter.  
My 16, 17, 2, 10, 22, 14, is a kind of picture.  
My 1, 5, 4, 7, 20, are parents.  
My whole is what occupies our time at this season of the year.

M. W. S.

### TWISTED OCCUPATIONS

1. Moon starrer.
2. Pent racer.
3. To cord.
4. Err cheap.
5. Yawler.
6. Mr. Fear.
7. Cheater.
8. I entice Carl.
9. C him set.
10. War eve.
11. I c a point.
12. I clean mop.
13. Red soil.
14. So liar.
15. O, a Ruth!

E. A. C.

### HIDDEN CITIES AND COUNTRIES

1. We hope King George will live long.
2. Pedro means to do right.
3. My father does not like fancy nor folk dancing.
4. Can a date pudding be made with raisins and figs?
5. The decision was final—banyan trees are more curious than rubber trees.
6. My friends are named Tarbel, Montgomery, and Jones.

CONSTANCE PURINGTON.

### ANAGRAM

May Mirth Toss Your Care!

This salutation is not nearly so strange as it sounds. In fact, if you will arrange the letters properly you will recognize it as a familiar expression of good will that is heard on all sides at a certain time of the year.

Youth's Companion.

### ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 8

ENIGMA XV.—A good book is the best of friends.

ENIGMA XVI.—William Bradford and John Winthrop.

FOUND ON THE THANKSGIVING TABLE.—1. Dish. 2. Cranberry Sauce. 3. Turkey. 4. Vegetables. 5. Pumpkin Pie. 6. Salted Almonds. 7. Cutlery. 8. Nuts.

JUMBLED PROVERBS.—1. Haste makes waste. 2. Every dog has his day. 3. Hitch your wagon to a star. 4. Delays are dangerous. 5. No news is good news.

## THE BEACON

REV. FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR.

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